

**THAT WHICH IS CLAIMED:**

1. An asset that packages related content and data for distribution and service implementation in a digital cable system, comprising:

5 at least one metadata object, wherein the at least one metadata object identifies an application that is associated with the asset;

at least one content object, wherein the at least one content object represents data to be stored based upon instructions of the application associated with the asset.

10

2. The asset of claim 1, further comprising an embedded asset, such that the asset is recursive.

15 3. The asset of claim 2, wherein the embedded asset further comprises at least one embedded content object.

4. The asset of claim 2, wherein the embedded asset further comprises at least one embedded metadata object.

20 5. The asset of claim 1, wherein the at least one content object represents data selected from the group consisting of an MPEG file, an executable file, an HTML page, and a JPEG image.

25 6. The asset of claim 1, wherein the at least one metadata object identifies the at least one content object.

7. The asset of claim 1, further comprising a machine readable description identifying the at least one metadata object and the at least one content object.

30 8. The asset of claim 7, wherein the machine readable description comprises XML.

9. A digital cable system that receives and delivers related content and data to facilitate service implementation in a digital cable system, comprising:

5 a staging server that receives an asset from a content provider, wherein the asset comprises content and data related to the content;

a content server in communication with a subscriber set-top box for providing the content to the set-top box; and

10 an application associated with the asset to interpret the data related to the content, wherein the application identifies the server that receives at least a portion of the content from the staging server.

10. The system of claim 9, further comprising an asset management system that parses the asset to determine that the asset identifies the application.

15 11. The system of claim 10, wherein the asset management system maintains a database associating the content and the data related to the content.

20 12. The system of claim 10, wherein the asset management system resides between the application and the staging server such that the staging server and application are in indirect communication.

25 13. The system of claim 10, wherein the asset management system is operable to instruct the content server to request at least a portion of the content from the staging server.

14. The system of claim 9, wherein the application is operable to identify the content server base upon the data related to the content.

30 15. The system of claim 9, wherein the content server receives at least a portion of the content from the staging server.

16. The system of claim 9, wherein the content server requests the at least a portion of the content from the staging server using File Transfer Protocol (FTP).

17. The system of claim 9, wherein the application comprises a provisioning user interface to allow a user to identify the at least one server to receive at least a portion of the content.

18. The system of claim 17, wherein the provisioning user interface allows a user to specify rules for distributing at least a portion of the content to the content server.

19. A method performed at a cable system headend for distributing related content and data to facilitate service implementation in a digital cable system, comprising:

- receiving an asset, wherein the asset includes a machine readable description identifying content and related data;
- storing the asset in a staging server;
- parsing the machine readable description to determine an application associated with the asset and identified by the related data;
- examining the related data at the application to identify the content server that should receive at least a portion of the content; and
- instructing the content server to retrieve the content from the staging server.

20. The method of claim 19, further comprising the step of receiving the content from the staging server.

21. The method of claim 20, wherein the receiving step comprises receiving the content directly from the staging server.

22. The method of claim 20, further comprising the step of retrieving the machine readable description from the staging server prior to the step of parsing the machine readable description.

23. The method of claim 20, wherein the step of examining the related data at the application further comprises the step of identifying the at least one server that should receive at least a portion of the content based upon rules defined by a user associated with the application.